

Āryas, Dāsas and Dasyus in the Rigveda

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Three very important words in the Rigveda are *ārya*, *dāsa* and *dasyu*. They are at least very important in the historical interpretation of the Rigveda, and it is necessary to understand exactly what they mean.

I have given the meanings many times in my books. In fact, in my third book, after the twelve chapters, I added a "postscript" chapter "Identities Past and Present" (TALAGERI 2008:355-370) specifically for two issues: first, to clarify the exact meaning of the words *ārya*, *dāsa* and *dasyu* in the Rigveda, and second, to clarify that the ancient clans, tribes and communities named in the Rigveda cannot by any stretch of the imagination, *after so many millenniums and so many historical and ethnic changes in the country*, be identified directly with any castes, territorial groups and communities in present-day India, not even if they bear the same names: e.g. the **Yadavs** of today are *not* the descendants of the **Yadu** of the Rigveda. Nor are the people of **Haryana** descendants of the **Pūru** of the Rigveda or the people of the **Punjab** the descendants of the **Anu** of the Rigveda. Nor, as I pointed out, are the different **Brahmin** communities in India—which claim descent from actual **rishis** of the Rigveda through *gotras* and *pravaras*—their actual descendants: there have been so many ethnic admixtures and co-options down the long and eventful millenniums that connections, *if any*, can only constitute a *tiny fraction* of the ancestry.

As I put it to make things very clear: "**take a direct example, the Saraswat Brahmins of the south (to which community this writer belongs) have a strong traditional history of having migrated from the areas of Kashmir and the Sarasvatī river, and even the name of the community testifies to this claim. Moreover, a linguistic analysis of the Konkani language spoken by the Saraswats shows different archaic features (pitch accents, an inflexional morphological structure, and many crucial items of vocabulary) which corroborate this tradition. But are the Saraswats themselves actually direct ethnic linear descendants of the Pūrus or their priestly classes? Clearly not:**

the physical features of the Saraswats are clearly identifiable with the physical features of other castes and communities of Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka.

In short, the history of Vedic times is just that: *the history of Vedic times*. It has to do with the history of civilizations and language families, and must be recognized as such; but it does not have *anything whatsoever* to do with relations between different ethnic, linguistic, caste or communal groups of the present day. The biases and the conflicts of ancient times are the biases and conflicts of ancient peoples *with whom present day peoples have no direct ethnic connections*." (TALAGERI 2008:365-66).

But to return to the main point of this article, the question of the exact identity of the *ārya*, *dāsa* and *dasyu* in the Rigveda is one which keeps on popping up in any discussions on "Aryans" or Rigvedic history, including in comments and queries on my other articles. I have already dealt with it in detail, but then I cannot expect that everyone has read all my books and articles and, further, learnt them by heart. I myself sometimes have to do quite some searching to trace out something that I know I have dealt with in my earlier writings but require the exact quotation or details.

So this article will deal only with the issue of the *ārya*, *dāsa* and *dasyu* in the Rigveda:

1. The *ārya* in the Rigveda.
2. The *dāsa* and *dasyu* in the Rigveda.

I. The *ārya* in the Rigveda

A great deal of energy is usually spent on trying to uncover the etymological meaning of the word *ārya*. Koenraad Elst, in an article on the subject, has pointed out some of the attempts by scholars in this direction:

1. From the root **ar-*, "plough, cultivate" (cf. Latin *arare*, *aratrum*), which would make them sedentary people as opposed to the nomads and hunter-gatherers.
2. From the root of Latin *ire*, "to go", so as to make it an apt name for a nomadic population.

3. From a root **al-*, "other" (greek *allos* and Latin *alius*, 'other'), then turned round to mean "hospitable" (those who are hospitable to strangers or others)!
4. From a root **h₂er-* (connected to Arabic-Hebrew root *hrr*, "to be free")
5. From a root **ar-*, "possess, acquire, share".
6. From a root **ar-*, "orderly, correct, dexterous".

It does not really matter at all from which of the above roots (or if from some other root) the word is derived. What we require is to understand what the word means in the Rigveda.

There are basically two opposite viewpoints: the view of the Indologists who back the AIT, and the view of Indian scholars opposed to the AIT:

The western Indologists have interpreted the word as referring to "Aryans" who invaded, or migrated or trickled into, India in 1500 BCE from Central Asia.

The Indian scholars opposed to this have interpreted the word to mean "noble" or "good", as it indeed does in later times.

The two views then get expanded: those in the Rigveda who are not *ārya* (there is no such word as *anārya* in the Vedic texts) or are opposed to the *ārya*, then become *non-Indo-European* "natives who were invaded by the Aryans" in the eyes of the supporters of the AIT, and "bad people" (or, in the words of many such scholars, "fallen Aryans", a term I have never been able to understand) in the eyes of its opponents.

It will be seen that the AIT-supporters give an *ethnic* meaning to the term, which is then variously expanded to include skin-colour, colour of the eyes and hair, and other distinctly racial characteristics. Even those scholars who are cautious in emphasizing such racial aspects, or even outright reject them (e.g. HOCK 1999b), continue to use the term at least in the linguistic sense: *ārya* means "Indo-European", and the word refers to an original *linguistic* difference between incoming "Indo-Aryans" and native "non-Aryans".

Many even give it a twist to suggest that the term may have been extended by the invaders to co-opt within its framework even some natives who adopted the language or Vedic religion of the invaders. In any case, for the actual interpretation of the Rigveda in invasionist terms, it is more convenient to suggest linguistic,

religious and cultural factors rather than *directly* racial ones such as skin, hair, eyes and physical characteristics.

This is clearly ridiculous: the concept of "language families" is a modern concept discovered by modern linguists. Although the difference between "Indo-European" languages and languages from other families is a real one, it is impossible that ancient people could have looked at other people as "speakers of languages belonging to our language family" and "speakers of languages belonging to other language families". Ancient Mesopotamia was a hotbed of different warring ethnicities: it is impossible that the Mitanni and the Hittites, among them, could have regarded each other as "Aryans" and the other Semitic, Elamite and Sumerian language speaking people as "non-Aryans". Even in the twentieth century, long after the linguistic theory was established, Hitler and the Nazis, who considered Germans to be the purest "Aryans", massacred Aryan-speaking gypsies in concentration camps, and treated Aryan-speaking Slavs as an inferior race, but the Uralic-speaking Finns were considered (by, for example, the Nazi theorist Himmler) as among the purest of "Germanic-Aryan" races and Finland as part of the Original Indo-European Homeland!

The opponents of the AIT, naturally, reject any ethnic associations with the term, and insist that the term refers to "good people". But the truth is that the word *ārya* is definitely used in the Rigveda by its composers to refer to themselves. And it cannot be in a purely moral sense, since many references also refer to enemies: these could hardly be references to "*good* enemies". At the same time, as we will see presently, the opposite term is even used for the *patrons* being *praised* by the composing rishis in some hymns.

The word is used 36 times in 34 hymns:

I.51.8; 59.2; 103.3; 117.21; 130.8; 156.5.

II.11.18,19.

III.34.9.

IV.26.2; 30.18.

V.34.6.

VI.18.3; 22.10; 25.2; 33.3; 60.6.

VII.5.6; 18.7; 33.7; 83.1.

VIII.24.7; 51.9; 103.1.

IX.63.5,14.

X.11.4; 38.3; 43.3; 49.3; 65.11; 69.6; 83.1; 86.19; 102.3; 138.3.

A. So what is the exact meaning of the word *ārya* as used in the Rigveda?

The word *ārya* in the Rigveda is nowhere used in reference to **Indo-European language** speaking people as opposed to **non-Indo-European language** speaking people. It refers to **Pūru** as opposed to **non-Pūru**.

In the Avesta, the same word (*airya*) is used in reference to **Iranians** (or perhaps the particular Iranian group composing the Avesta) as opposed to **non-Iranians** (or Iranian groups other than the particular Iranian group to which the composers belong).

As we will see presently, the main rivals of the Vedic **Indo-Aryans (Pūru)** in the Rigveda are the **proto-Iranians (Anu)**. So how could the same word in two different texts refer respectively to the two rival entities?

The answer is simple: the connotation of the word, whatever its etymological origin, is “**belonging to our tribe/community**”, and in that sense it is a “**communal**” word.

Among the Saraswats of Karnataka, there is a word “**amchigelo**” which is used in *exactly* this same sense of “**belonging to our community**”. In earlier, more parochial, times, a Chitrapur Saraswat would refer to another Chitrapur Saraswat as “**amchigelo**”, but to a Gaud Saraswat as “*not amchigelo*”; and, *at the same time*, a Gaud Saraswat would refer to another Gaud Saraswat as “**amchigelo**”, but to a Chitrapur Saraswat as “*not amchigelo*”—now, the term has become a more liberal one, and is used by most people in both the communities to include *each other* as well.

Basically, *ārya* in itself did not mean **Pūru**: it was used in the Rigveda in that sense because the composers and their tribes were **Pūru**.

The word is generally found in the hymns in general contexts where it is not identity-specific, except that it is clear that it is used for the People of the Book. However, when it is used in specific contexts, it is clearly in reference to **Pūrus**:

a) In reference to individuals, it refers to Divodāsa in **I.130.8; IV.26.2** and **VIII.103.1**.

b) In a tribal sense, it clearly refers only to **Pūrus**: in **I.59.2**, Agni is said to be produced by the Gods to be a light unto the **ārya**, and in the sixth verse of the hymn, in **I.59.6**, it is clear that the hymn is composed on behalf of the **Pūrus**. Likewise, in **VII.5.6**, Agni is said to drive away the **dasyus** and bring forth broad light for the **ārya**, and in the third verse of the hymn, in **VII.5.3**, the deed is categorically said to be done for the **Pūru**.

c) The word is *never* used for **non-Pūrus**: e.g. although the **Trkṣi** kings Purukutsa and Trasadasyu are praised to the skies, and Trasadasyu is even described as a “demi-god” in **IV.42.8,9**, in recognition for some crucial help rendered by them to the **Pūrus** (**I.63.7**; **IV.38.1**; **VI.20.10**; **VII.19.3**), neither of them is ever called an **ārya**. Nor are any of the other **non-Pūru** patrons of the rishis in the **New Books** (**VIII.1.31**; **4.19**; **5.37**; **6.46,48**; **19.32,36**; **65.12**, etc) ever referred to as **ārya**.

B. Who are the Composers who use this word?

Of the 34 hymns which use this word:

a) It is used in **28** hymns by composers belonging to the **Bharata** family itself or its two closely affiliated rishi families, the **Angirases** and the **Vasiṣṭhas**: **I.51.8**; **59.2**; **103.3**; **117.21**; **130.8**; **156.5**; **IV.26.2**; **30.18**; **VI.18.3**; **22.10**; **25.2**; **33.3**; **60.6**; **VII.5.6**; **18.7**; **33.7**; **83.1**; **VIII.24.7**; **X.11.4**; **38.3**; **43.3**; **49.3**; **65.11**; **69.6**; **83.1**; **86.19**; **102.3**; **138.3**.

b) It is used in **3** hymns by partially affiliated families like the **Gṛtsamadas** and **Viśvāmitras**: **II.11.18,19**; **III.34.9**; **V.34.6**.

c) And it is used in **2** hymns by totally neutral families like the **Atris**, **Kaṇvas**, **Bhṛgus** and **Agastyas**: **VIII.51.9**; **103.1**.

d) The **1** last reference, by the most unaffiliated and ritualistic families of composers, the **Kaśyapas**, represents the first and only use of the word in the Rigveda in a purely symbolic and non-personal sense (the exact sense of which is widely debated): **IX.63.5,14**.

Both the references by the neutral families are by **Kaṇvas**, and the two references again emphasize the fact that the *āryas* are the **Pūrus**: the **Kaṇvas** were a neutral family with numerous patron kings, named in the **New Rigveda**, from *all* the different (**non-Pūru**) tribes, and:

- a) **VIII.51.9** diplomatically refers to *both* the *āryas* and the *dāsas* as being the beneficiaries of Indra’s bounty, while
- b) **VIII.103.1** refers, as we saw, to Divodāsa—so that even **Kaṇvas**, who never refer to a single one of their numerous **non-Pūru** patrons as an *ārya*, reserve the word for **Pūrus**.

C. Who are the enemy *āryas* in the Rigveda?

Even more significant is the fact that there are *nine* hymns which refer to *āryas* among the **enemies** of the particular hymns.

These references make little sense in the AIT interpretation, except for the generalized conclusion that the “Aryans fought among themselves” as also with the “non-Aryans”. What the AIT scholars fail to realize is that all these hymns establish a pattern, which logically shows that there was only *one* section, from among the people (the **Pūru**) calling themselves (and recognizing each other as) *ārya*, which were the real People of the Book in the Rigveda, while there were other sections, also recognized as *ārya*, which were *not*.

Of course, those determined to find “**complex**” situations in the Rigveda could argue that the different hymns referring to *ārya* enemies could each have a different group of protagonist *āryas* and enemy *āryas*, so that the protagonist *āryas* of one hymn could be the enemy *āryas* of another, and vice versa. But logic shows that this would be unlikely, since the hymns are clearly a collection belonging to *one* particular group of people.

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The references, however, make sense in our analysis, where the particular People of the Book are the **Bharata Pūru** alone, so that there are other sections of **Pūru**, also recognized and referred to as *ārya*, who are not directly among the People of the Book. These references to enemy *āryas* prove our case to the hilt: of the *nine* references to enemy *āryas* (**IV.30.18**; **VI.22.10**; **33.3**; **60.6**; **VII.83.1**; **X.38.3**; **69.6**;

83.1; 102.3), two are by **Bharata** composers, and *all the remaining seven* by the two rishi families closely affiliated to them, the **Angirases** and **Vasiṣṭhas**.

This is not *only* by chance, or simply because most of the references to **āryas** (also by chance?) are by these three families of composers. There are seven other hymns which again refer to the same situation in different words: they refer to **jāmi** (kinsmen) and **ajāmi** (non-kinsmen) enemies. Of these seven references (**I.100.11**; **111.3**; **IV.4.5**; **VI.19.8**; **25.3**; **44.17**; **X.69.12**), *one* is by a **Bharata** composer (a descendant of Sudās, who attributes this late hymn, **X.69**, to Sudās himself; and this same hymn, it may be noted, also has one of the **ārya**-enemy references; see above) and *all the remaining six* are by **Angirases** and **Vasiṣṭhas**.

In addition, one more (**VI.75**), by an **Angiras**, likewise refers to **sva araṇa** (hostile kinsmen) and **niṣṭya** (non-kinsmen) enemies.

There is more. There is one hymn which refers to the same situation in yet other words: **X.133.5** refers to **sanābhi** (kinsmen) and **niṣṭya** (non-kinsmen) enemies. This *single* reference is by a **Bharata** composer.

The force of all this evidence will be even clearer when we see that there are only 19 hymns composed by Bharata composers out of a total of 1028 hymns in the Rigveda. But *3 out of 34 hymns* in the Rigveda which use the word **ārya**, *2 out of 9 hymns* in the Rigveda which refer to "both **ārya** and **dāsa** enemies", *1 out of 7 hymns* in the Rigveda which refer to "**jāmi** and **ajāmi** enemies", and *the only hymn* which refers to "**sanābhi** and **niṣṭya** enemies", are directly by **Bharata** composers: in all, 4 out of 18 such references are by actual **Bharata** composers, and the rest by their affiliated rishis, the **Angirases** and **Vasiṣṭhas**.

Finally, as if all this were not clear enough, we have *one* more reference, this one by the **Viśvāmitras**, which clinches the case: it is in *one* of the *two* hymns (**III.33**, 53) which directly refers to the period when the **Viśvāmitras**, *before* the **Vasiṣṭhas**, were closely affiliated to the **Bharatas** as the priests of Sudās, and it is the only hymn in this Book which actually mentions Sudās by name. It refers to **prapitvam** (relationship) and **apapitvam** (non-relationship). The last verse,

III.53.24, tells us that the **Bharatas** (specifically named as such) do not recognize non-relationship or relationship when dealing with their enemies in battle.

Note that the Rigveda refers to the **Pūru** (*meaning particularly the **Bharata Pūru***) throughout the Rigveda in a benevolent and first-person sense. But in *two* cases, where there is some conflict or difference of interest between the **Bharata Pūru** and the *other* or **non-Bharata Pūru**, to whom the word *then* refers, the references are critical: VII.8.4 and VII.18.13. One of the two references is in the battle hymn. Therefore, it is clear that the protagonist *āryas* of the Rigveda are the **Bharatas**, and the enemy *āryas* in a few hymns are the other, **non-Bharata**, sections among the *greater* conglomeration of tribes of which the **Bharatas** are a part, i.e. among the **Pūrus**, who are otherwise clearly the People of the Book in a broader sense (which the **Anus**, **Druhyus**, **Yadus** and **Turvasus** are definitely not)

So the word *ārya* in the Rigveda has neither a racial-ethnic meaning nor a linguistic meaning, and nor does it have any kind of moral-ethical or qualitative meaning: it is simply a "communal" word meaning "of our community" and referring to the **Pūru** in general and the **Bharata Pūru** in particular.

II. The *dāsa* and *dasyu* in the Rigveda

The two words usually, and correctly, pitted against the *ārya* in the Rigveda are the **dāsa** and **dasyu**. It must be noted at the same time that these two words, unlike the word *ārya*, have also acquired very heavy mythologization, so that in a *very large* number of cases, they represent mythological entities (primarily associated with the demons of the air who attack the phenomena of nature, such as rain and the dawn, and are therefore vanquished by Indra) at the same time as they represent historical entities. In many cases, the references are so vague, and the mythological and historical symbolism so intertwined, that it is hazardous to draw historical inferences from them.

Nevertheless, they *are*, at the base, derived from historical entities, so we can examine the general historical *bases* of the two words without trying to interpret every individual reference in historical terms.

These two words are found in the Rigveda as follows:

Dāsa: 54 Hymns, 63 verses:

I.32.11; 92.8; 103.3; 104.2; 158.5; 174.7.

II.11.2,4; 12.4; 13.8; 20.6,7.

III.12.6; 34.1.

IV.18.9; 28.4; 30.14,15,21; 32.10.

V.30.5,7,8,9; 33,4; 34.6.

VI.20.6,10; 22.10; 25.2; 26.5; 33.3; 47.21; 60.6.

VII.19.2; 83.1; 86.7; 99.4.

VIII.5.31; 24.27; 32.2; 40.6; 46.32; 51.9; 56.3; 70.10; 96.18.

X.22.8; 23.2; 38.3; 49.6,7; 54.1; 62.10; 69.6; 73.7; 83.1; 86.19; 99.6; 102.3; 120.2; 138.3; 148.2.

Dasyu: 65 hymns, 80 verses:

I.33.4,7,9; 36.18; 51.5,6,8; 53.4; 59.6; 63.4; 78.4; 100.18; 101.5; 103.3,4; 104.5; 117.3,21; 175.3.

II.11.18,19; 12.10; 13.9; 15.9; 20.8.

III.29.9; 34.6,9; 49.2.

IV.16.9,10,12; 28.3,4; 38.1.

V.4.6; 7.10; 14.4; 29.10; 30.9; 31.5,7; 70.3.

VI.14.3; 16.15; 18.3; 23.2; 24.8; 29.6; 31.4; 45.24.

VII.5.6; 6.3; 19.4.

VIII.6.14; 14.14; 39.8; 50.8; 70.11; 76.11; 77.3; 98.6.

IX.41.2; 47.2; 88.4; 92.5.

X.22.8; 47.4; 48.2; 49.3; 55.8; 73.5; 83.3,6; 95.7; 99.7,8; 105.7,11; 170.2.

The popular Indological approach is to treat the *dāsas* and *dasyus* in the Rigveda as "non-Aryan" natives of India in opposition to "invading Aryans". And, although "non-Aryan" should mean *linguistically* "non-Indo-European" and nothing else, the dominant and mainstream Indological academia has never seen fit to explain its claims about "non-Aryans" on linguistic grounds, by showing that the *dāsas* and *dasyus*, and countless other natural phenomena and entities in the Rigveda that they convert into historical "non-Aryan" entities, are linguistically Dravidian, Austric, Burushaski, Sino-Tibetan, Andamanese, Semitic, Sumerian, or any other

known linguistic entity. They simply brand them as "non-Aryan" and insist, like spoilt brats, that their claims should be treated as "scientific". As all this is very, very, old garbage in the AIT-OIT debate, we will not go into it here. We will see what the words *dāsa* and *dasyu* mean, rather than what they do *not* mean.

It is not that no serious scholar has ever comprehended the real meanings of the words: Dr. B.R. (Babasaheb) Ambedkar, for example, emphatically rejected the idea that *dāsas* and *dasyus* were linguistically “non-Indo-European”; and concluded, instead, that the words were merely indicative of “**different communities of Aryas who were not only different but opposed and inimical to each other**” (AMBEDKAR 1990:87), and even that the *dāsas* were *Iranians* (AMBEDKAR 1990:104). George Erdosy, an AIT scholar, accepts that “**Arya and Dasa were only horizontal divisions, denoting groups of people living in their separate territories in north-western India**” (ERDOSY 1989:39), that *dasyus* were only “**a segment of Dasas**” (ERDOSY 1989:37), and also that the term *paṇi* was used for people who were “**rich and niggardly**” and possibly “**usurers**”, and that the group of *paṇis* “**cross-cuts the otherwise horizontal stratification of non-Aryas, [...] and may denote either an occupation or simply a set of values attributable to anyone**” (ERDOSY 1989:37).

Emile Benveniste also notes that “**the Avestan word for 'country' *dahyu* (anc-*dasyu*) has as its Sanskrit correspondent *dasyu***” and that this “**reflects conflict between the Indian and Iranian peoples**”. But he tries to fit it into the invasionist paradigm by suggesting that “**the name by which this enemy people called themselves collectively took on a hostile connection**” and was later applied to natives of India: therefore in the Rigveda “***dasyu* may be taken as an ethnic**” of India (BENVENISTE 1969/1973:260-261)!

The words *dāsa* and *dasyu*, clearly refer to the *Others* in the Rigveda: i.e. to the *Other-than-the-Pūrus*. But it is clear, from two circumstances, that the words *originally and primarily referred to the proto-Iranians* (the *Anus*), even though also used as a general term for all *non-Pūrus*:

The evidence for this very significant:

1. The words *dāṇha* (by itself) and *danhu/danhuš* (in suffixes), the Avestan equivalents of *dāsa* and *dasyu*, are found in personal names in the Avesta: *Dāṇha*,

Daṇhu.frādah, Daṇhu.srūta, Ātəṛadaṇhu, Jarō.daṇhu, Əṛəzauuaṇt-daṇhzuš. And both the words have pleasant or neutral meanings.

2. The word **daha** in certain Iranian languages (e.g. Khotanese), even today, has the meaning “man”.

3. Greek texts refer to an Iranian people known as the **Dahae**, who were prominent in Iranian history in Central Asia.

4. The word **dāsa** is used in a friendly sense in only *three* references in the Rigveda (see TALAGERI 2000:206-208), and as *all* three of them are *dānastutis*, or hymns in praise of patron or donor kings, it is clear that the uncharacteristic friendly sense of the word has to do with the identity of the donor kings. In *two* of these hymns, the names of the patron kings have been identified by many western scholars, (*including* Hoffman, Wilson, Weber, Witzel and Gamkrelidze) as **proto-Iranian** names: **Kaśu Caidya** in VIII.5 and **Prthuśravas Kānīta** in VIII.46. And the name of the patron king in the third hymn, **Ruśama Pavīru** in VIII.51, may well be a **proto-Iranian** name too: MLBhargava (BHARGAVA:1964) identifies the **Ruśamas** as a tribe of the extreme northwest from the Soma lands of Suśomā and Ārjīkīyā. This clearly places them in the territory of the Iranians.

[The three hymns, VIII.5,46,51, along with another hymn VIII.6, constitute a group of four unique hymns in the Rigveda, in a separate class from all the other hymns:

a) three of them (VIII.5,6,46) donate **camels** to the rishis rather than cattle.

b) three of them (VIII.5,46,51) speak well of the **dāsas**.

c) three of them (VIII.5,6,46) have **proto-Iranian** names (see above)]

But what is the exact relationship between **dāsas** and **dasyus**?

In the Rigveda, it is clear that **dasyu** was a name for a *section* among the **dāsas**: this is specifically stated in IV.28.4, and is noted by scholars like Erdosy (ERDOSY 1989:37). But the exact nature of this sectional identity is not comprehended by the scholars: the dāsas were the tribes and the dasyus were the priestly class among the non-Purus, and this is crystal clear from the references:

a) The **dasyus** are referred to in terms of hostility which have to do with religious or ritual differences: **ayajvan** (I.33.4), **anyavrata** (VIII.70.11; X.22.8), **adevayu** (VIII.70.11), **akarman** (X.22.8), **abrahman** (IV.16.9), **avrata** (I.51.8; 175.3;

VI.14.3; IX.41.2), *amanyamāna* (I.33.9; II.12.10), *grathin* (VII.6.3), *ayajña* (VII.6.3), *avṛdha* (VII.6.3), *aśraddha* (VII.6.3), *akratu* (VII.6.3), *māyāvat* (IV.16.9), *apṛṇat* (V.7.10), *anṛc* (X.105.7-11) and *anās* (V.29.10).

Not one of these words is used even *once* in reference to *dāsas*.

b) The *dāsas* find mention in all the Books of the Rigveda, except the most ritualistic Book (Book 9), and in the hymns of all the families of rishis except the *most ritualistic priestly family*, the **Kaśyapas**.

By contrast, *dasyus* find mention in the hymns of all the families of rishis, except the *one non-priestly family*, the **Bharatas**.

c) The *dāsas* (being tribes and kings) frequently figure as powerful entities to be feared, whether the word is used for human enemies or symbolically for atmospheric demons: in seven hymns (I.104.2; 158.5; VIII.24.27; X.22.8; 54.1; 69.6; 102.3), the composers ask for protection from *dāsas*, or are rescued from them by the Gods. In three others (I.32.11; V.30.5; VIII.96.18), the *dāsas* are powerful demons who hold the celestial waters in their thrall.

The *dasyus*, on the other hand, are rarely shown as particularly powerful. In fact, they are depicted as sly creatures who incite others to hostile acts (V.24.18).

d) The *dāsas* are sometimes depicted together in *one* bracket with the *āryas*, with *both* depicted as enemies (in VI.20.10; 33.3; 60.6; VII.83.1; X.38.3; 69.6; 83.1; 102.3) or *both* as friendly entities (in VIII.51.9).

The *dasyus*, however, do not figure even *once* with *āryas* in such references. The logic behind this is obvious: only same-category entities can normally be bracketed together. Thus, we would say “Muslims and Christians” (communities of people), or “*mullahs* and *padres*” (priestly groups), but normally *not* “Muslims and *padres*” or “*mullahs* and Christians”. Clearly, in the Rigveda, *āryas* and *dāsas* are communities, and can therefore be bracketed together, but *dasyus* are priestly groups and *cannot* be similarly bracketed together with *āryas*.

The Rigvedic hymns are basically the compositions of priests, and hence the hostility towards rival classes of priests (*dasyus*) is sharper in the hymns than the hostility towards **non-Pūrus** (*dāsas*). Thus the word *dāsa*, like the related Avestan words, must have originally had a *good* connotation, and this is found in its use in

the early name *Divodāsa*. Likewise, of the 63 or so verses which refer to *dāsas*, only 38 talk of direct physical violence against them; and, as we saw, *three* are even friendly references by donation-accepting priestly composers.

On the other hand, *every single* one of the 80 or so verses which refer to *dasyus* is uncompromisingly hostile, and 76 of them talk of direct physical violence against them. And, although, like the word *dāsa*, the word *dasyu* must also have had an originally *good* etymological connotation, it is never used in a good sense even when it is part of a name (e.g. *Trasadasyu*: “tormentor of the *dasyus*”).

[Incidentally, the reference in X.49.3, where the composer expresses his refusal to call a *dasyu* by the name “*ārya*” makes sense only in the above contexts. If *ārya* and *dasyu* were ethnic-linguistic terms, the question of calling a “non-Aryan” *dasyu* an *ārya* would never arise at all, and the verse makes no sense. But *ārya* means a *Pūru*, and the *dasyu* referred to in this particular verse may be a *Pūru* (an *ārya* by community) who has joined a rival priestly class of the non-*Pūrus*, just as a branch of the *Bhṛ̥gus* after *Jamadagni*, who were *Anus*, joined the priestly classes of the *Pūrus*].

The words *dāsa* and *dasyu*, therefore, have nothing to do with any “non-Aryan”, in the sense of “non-Indo-European”, contexts.

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